

Foreword

In 2009 the International Labour Organization celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). Today the global economy poses a number of challenges for employment, wages, working conditions and employment relations. Collective bargaining has a critical role to play in addressing these challenges and in advancing social justice. Yet as we know, union membership has been declining and collective bargaining has been weakened or remains underdeveloped in many parts of the world.

There is thus a need to advance scholarship on how the exercise of this right contributes to balanced economic and social development. This should inform policy development and help governments, workers and employers' organizations create an enabling environment within which to effectively exercise this right. This volume is a valuable contribution in that regard. It helps to build knowledge on the theory and practice of this fundamental principle and rights at work.

The volume brings together both ILO and external academic researchers to examine the impact of collective bargaining on different issues and in different parts of the world. As can be expected, the chapters reflect a diverse set of views and disciplines. The contributing authors explore a number of different issues, such as the role that collective bargaining can play in the context of the economic crisis, innovative practices and the economic effects of collective bargaining. The contributions cover a broad range of country contexts. Some may inform policy and institutional renewal in higher income countries where these institutions are more established. Others draw out the lessons and implications in respect of developing countries. While there is a strong comparative theme running throughout the volume, the authors are cautious of the risk of generalizing from one country to another.

The volume also points to areas requiring additional policy oriented research. These include the role that collective bargaining can play in recovery from the economic crisis and how this institution can encompass and improve the lives of those working under precarious employment contracts.

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